
Dr. TILLOTSON's
SERMON

Before the QUEEN.

March the 7th. 16⁸⁹₉₀.

STERNON

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd before the
Q U E E N
A T
W H I T E - H A L L
March the 7th, 16⁸⁹/₉₀.

By JOHN TILLOTSON, D. D. Dean of
St. Paul's : And Clerk of the Closet to
His Majesty.

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S E R M O N

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MATTH. 25. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment,
but the Righteous into life eternal.*

AMong all the arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of men, which are fetch'd from another World; and from the final state of good and bad men after this Life. And this our Saviour represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the later part of this Chapter, he gives us of the Judgment of the great Day, namely, that at the end of the World the

Son of Man shall come in his glory, with his Holy Angels, and shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory; and all Nations shall be gathered before him, and shall be separated into two great Companies, the Righteous and the Wicked; who shall stand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who shall pronounce sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The Righteous shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and the Wicked shall be sentenc'd to everlasting punishment. *And these, that is, the Wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The Words are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at first hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, and between endless Happiness and Misery: But although these Words be so very easie to be understood, they can never be too much consider'd by us. The Scope and design of them is, to represent to us the different Fates of good and bad men in another World, and that their Ends there, will be as different, as their Ways and doings have been here in this World: The serious consideration whereof is the greatest

est discouragement to Sin, and the most powerful argument in the World to a holy and virtuous life: Because it is an argument taken from our greatest and most lasting interest, our happiness or our misery to all Eternity: A concernment of that vast consequence, that it must be the greatest stupidity and folly in the World for any man to neglect it.

This eternal state of Rewards and Punishments in another World, our *Blessed Saviour* hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, viz. That good men shall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part should be true, concerning the eternal punishment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Justice of God to punish temporary Crimes with eternal Torments: Because Justice always observes a proportion between Offences and Punishments: but between temporary Sins and eternal Punishments there is no proportion. And as this seems hard to be reconcil'd with Justice, so much more with that excess of Goodness which we suppose to be in God.

And therefore they say, that though God seem to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners shall

shall be everlastingly punish'd, yet these declarations of Scripture are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the essential perfections of the Divine nature.

This is the full force and strength of the Objection. And my work at this time shall be to clear, if I can, this difficult Point. And that for these two Reasons. *First*, For the vindication of the Divine Justice and Goodness. That God may be justified in his sayings, and appear Righteous when he judgeth. And *Secondly*, because the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmost extent is of so great moment to a good Life, and so great a discouragement to Sin: For the sting of Sin is the terrour of eternal punishment; and if men were once set free from the fear and belief of this, the most powerful restraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour to prove these two things.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

Secondly, That this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God. *First*,

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following Texts, Matth. 18. 8. It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And Matth. 25. 41. Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. And here in the Text, these, that is the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment. And Mark 9. It is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our Saviour, where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched. And 2 Thess. 1. 9. speaking of them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of his Son, it is said of them, who shall be punish'd with everlasting destruction.

I know very well that great endeavour hath been us'd to avoid the force of these Texts, by shewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited sence, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signifie for a long time and till the end of the *Jewish Dispensation*. And in the *Epistle of St. Jude, verse 7th.* The Cities of *Sodom and Gomorrah* are said to be set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, that

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is, of a fire that was not extinguish'd till those Cities were utterly consumed.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signifie an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently proved by the instances alledg'd to this purpose. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denyed on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger sence and so as necessarily to signifie an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness in another World is promised to good men, and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord*. Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both, because if God had intended to have told us that the punishment of wicked men shall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than those that are used in this case, whereby to expresse to us a duration without end: And likewise, which is almost a perempto-

remptory decision of the thing, because the duration of the punishment of wicked men is in the very same sentence express'd by the very same word which is us'd for the duration of the happiness of the righteous: As is evident from the Text, *These*, speaking of the wicked, *shall go away*, *εις κόλασιν αἰώνιον*, into eternal punishment, but the righteous, *εις ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, into life eternal. I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd; namely, to shew that this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be answered several ways, none of which seems to me to give clear and full satisfaction to it.

II.

First, it is said by some, that because sin is infinite in respect of the Object against whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deserves an infinite punishment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of subtlety than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Person against whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reason all offences against God are certainly the greatest of all other. But that crimes should

hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted ; and that for this plain reason ; because then the evil and demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal ; for the demerit of no sin can be more than infinite : And if the demerit of all sins be equal, there can then be no reason for the degrees of punishment in another World : But to deny that there are degrees of punishment there, is not only contrary to reason, but to our Saviours express assertion, that some shall be *beaten with many stripes* and some with *fewer*, and that it shall be *more tolerable for some in the day of judgment* than for others. Besides, that by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against God may be said to be infinite because of its object, the least punishment that is inflicted by God may be said to be infinite because of its Author ; and then all punishments from God as well as all sins against him would be equal ; which is palpably absurd. So that this answer is by no means sufficient to break the force of this Objection.

Secondly, It is said by others, that if wicked men lived for ever, in this World they would sin for ever, and therefore they deserve to be punish'd for ever. But this hath neither truth

truth nor reason enough in it to give satisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never so long he would never repent and grow better?

Besides, that the Justice of God doth onely punish the sins which men have committed in this life, and not those which they might possibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, it is said in the last place, that God hath set before men everlasting Happiness and Misery, and the sinner hath his choice. Here are two things said which seem to bid fairly towards an answer.

First, that the reward which God promiseth to our obedience is equal to the punishment which he threatens to our disobedience. But yet this I doubt will not reach the business: Because though it be not contrary to Justice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be so, to exceed in Punishments.

Secondly, it is further said, that the sinner in this case hath nothing to complain of, since he hath his own choice. This I confess is enough to silence the sinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his destruction is of himself; but yet for all that, it does not seem so clearly

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to satisfy the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by these following Considerations.

First, let it be consider'd, that the measure of Penalties with respect to Crimes is not onely, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of Government; which require such penalties as may, if it be possible, secure the observation of the Law and deter men from the breach of it. And the reason of this is evident, because if it were once declar'd that no man should suffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the consequence of this would be that sinners would be better husbands of their time & sin so much the faster, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might satisfy for their sins by a shorter punishment.

And it would be unreasonable likewise upon another account; because some of the greatest sins may perhaps be committed in the shortest time; for instance, *Murther*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it
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are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of Murther may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being punish'd with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force.

Besides, that whoever considers how ineffectual the threatening even of eternal torments is to greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfi'd that a less penalty than that of eternal suffering would to the far greatest part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishment; but from one great end and design of Government, which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and

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consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver; then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal sufferings Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented*; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The case then in short stands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lye at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what punishment upon us he pleaseth: And consequently, to secure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deter men from the Transgression of it.

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And this is not esteemed unjust among men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: But in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand, and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of Gods truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Niniveh*, and his peevish *Prophet* did understand the threatning to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the threatning he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was so touch'd in honour that he had rather have dyed himself, than that *Niniveh* should not have been destroy'd, onely to have verifi'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath confirm'd these threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain sign of the immutability of his counsel; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impenitent Sinners under the Gospel; and consequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*, when he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally

ly oblige Him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent Sinners under the Gospel, that *they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God.* And this is very truly reason'd, so far as the threatning extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be stretch'd, doth not seem to reach any further than to the exclusion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven and their falling finally short of the Rest and Happiness of the Righteous: Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion ascrib'd to *Origen* that the Devils and wicked men shall all be saved at last; God having *sworn in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest.*

But then, as to the eternal misery and punishment threatned to wicked men in the other World, though it be not necessarily comprehended in this Oath that they *shall not enter into his Rest*: yet we are to consider, that both the tenour of the Sentence which our Blessed Saviour hath assur'd us will be pass'd upon them at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*; and likewise this Declaration in the Text, that *the Wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment*, though they do not restrain God from doing what he pleases, yet they cut

off from the Sinner all reasonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For since the great Judge of the World hath made so plain and express a Declaration, and will certainly pass such a Sentence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in the world for the Sinner to entertain any hope of escaping it, and to venture his soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon this Argument, that seems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *destruction* and *perishing*, whereby the punishment of wicked men in the other World is most frequently express'd in *Scripture*, do most properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reasonably be so understood in the matter of which we are now speaking.

To this I answer, that these words, and those which answer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, used to signify a state of great misery and suffering without the utter extinction of the miserable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* said to bring *destruction* upon a Nation when he sends great Judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in most Languages, than by *perishing* to express a person's
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being undone and made very miserable. As in that known passage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the Roman Senate, * *Let all the Gods and Goddeses,* * Ita me Dij Deaq; omnes pejus perdant quam hodie perire me sentio, &c. saith he, *destroy me worse than at this very time I feel my self to perish, &c.* in which Saying, the words, *destroy* and *perish*, are both of them us'd to express the miserable anguish and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

And as for the word *Death*; a state of misery which is as bad or worse than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: And for this reason the punishment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the Revelation so frequently and fitly call'd *the second death*. And the *Lake of fire*, into which the wicked shall be cast to be tormented in it, is expressly call'd *the second death*. Rev. 20. 14.

But besides this, they that argue from the force of these words, that the punishment of wicked men in the other world shall be nothing else but an utter end of their Being, do necessarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

First, that hereby they exclude all positive punishment and torment of Sinners. For if *the second death*, and to be *destroy'd*, and to *perish*, signifie nothing else but the *Annihilation* of Sinners

ners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful Sentence which shall be pals'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, than the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture*, which doth so often describe the punishment of wicked men in Hell by positive torments: And particularly our Blessed Saviour, describing the lamentable state of the damned in Hell, expressly says that *there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; which cannot be, if Annihilation be all the meaning and effect of the Sentence of the Great Day.

Secondly, another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the punishment of Sinners in the other World, then the punishment of all Sinners must of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this also is most directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already shewn.

I know very well that some who are of this Opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their Being.

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But then they must not argue this from the force of the Words before mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that Annihilation is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next Life ; And if that be not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in *Scripture* they can find the left ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked men shall at last end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot see what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

Thirdly, we may consider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punish'd, but that they may not sin, and so may escape the punishment threatn'd. And therefore the higher the threatening runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it ; because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatn'd.

Fourthly, Let it be consider'd likewise, that
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when it is so very plain that God hath threatn'd eternal misery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earnest and will execute these threatnings upon them, if they will obstinately stand it out with him and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reason we ought so to demean our selves, and so to persuade others, as knowing the terrour of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and last place, That if we suppose that God did intend that his threatnings should have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the same Revelation which declares these threatnings any intimation should be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terrour of his threatnings: Because a threatning hath quite lost its force, if we once come to beleive that it will not be executed: And consequently, it would be a very impious design to go about to teach or persuade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that misery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided. We

We are all bound to preach, and You and I, are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not so, as sawcily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do; and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and express threatening of the vengeance of eternal fire, we still go on to treasure up to our selves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far, God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very sollicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that He, who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that He will

certainly to manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, as to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged. For, notwithstanding his Threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own hands, to do right to all his Perfections: And therefore we may rest assured, that he will judge the world in righteousness; and if it be any wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which He knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable for ever, that He will not do it.

But let Sinners always be afraid of it, and reckon upon it. And always remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's Threatnings; and that nothing will more justify the infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This, I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, to work out our Salvation with fear and trembling; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly severe, that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This

This God heartily desires we would do; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this misery upon us. And both these, I am sure, are arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more, than to warn us of this misery, and earnestly to persuade us to prevent it; and to threaten us so very terribly, on purpose to deter us from so great a danger?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we will still go on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance;* what in reason remains for us, but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to consume us? And what almost can Justice, or even Goodness it self do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no persuasion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the Apostle says, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things, are worthy of death;* yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice; and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us Life and Death, eternal Happiness and Misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune: And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this Misery, *Wo unto us! for we have rewarded evil to our selves.*

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Punishment the just God hath threaten'd to the Workers of Iniquity: and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. *These, that is, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal.*

Here are Life and Death, Happiness and Misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were

were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences of it : But an eternal Life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleasant and happy ; and a perpetual Death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

These God propounds to our choice : And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our sins, and to reform our lives, what will ? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the understanding of Man, than *everlasting Punishment*, and *Life eternal* ; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now, considering in what terms the Threatnings of the Gospel are express'd, we have all the reason in the world to believe that the Punishment of Sinners in another world will be *everlasting*. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it ; not till we come there, and find by experience how it is : And if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

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Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being discharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty consolation, that they shall be miserable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment of things? No consideration and care of themselves, no concernment for their own lasting Interest and Happiness?

Origen, I know not for what good reason, is said to have been of opinion, That the punishment of Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thousand years; and that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly persuade myself, that so wise and learned a man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which
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there can be no certain ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise term of a thousand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thousand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which seems to be plainly threaten'd in the Gospel: I say, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiser to take care to avoid it, than to dispute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, especially if we put it at the worst, as in all prudence we ought to do; it is by all possible means to be provided against: So terrible, so intolerable is the thought, yea the very least suspicion of being miserable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask You, as St. Paul did King Agrippa, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may answer my self as he did, *I know you do believe them.* And in them these things are clearly revealed, and are part of that Creed of which we make a solemn profession every day.

And:

And yet when we consider how most men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our Saviour and our Judge, That the wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal ?

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart ? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our Actions, we must either alter our Bible and our Creed, or we must change our Lives.

Let us then consider, and shew our selves men. And if we do so, can any man to please himself for a little while be contented to be punish'd for ever ; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next World ?

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet ; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of Sin and Vice : Because they
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bid us so infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short Pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the Scales against any Pleasure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or can threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly; when *we know the terrours of the Lord*, and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loss of our immortal Souls, and by *suffering the vengeance of eternal Fire*?

What is it then that can give men the *Heart and Courage*; but I recall that Word, because it is not true *Courage*, but *fool-hardiness*, thus to outbrave the Judgment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable Eternity? How is it possible that men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet hour, whil'st so great a danger

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hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and just sense of this danger, we cannot fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to escape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be Happy or Miserable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate and measure things as they appear now to our sensual and deluded and deprav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the last issue and consequence of them: Let us often think of these things, and consider well with our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill and possess our minds, when we shall stand trembling before our *Judge*, in a fearful expectation of that terrible *Sentence* which is just ready to be pronounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounc'd to be executed upon us: When we shall have a full and clear sight of the unspeakable Happiness, and of the horrible and astonishing Miseries of another World: When there shall be no longer any Veil of Flesh and Sense to interpose between them and us, and to hide these things from our eyes: And, in a word, when Heaven
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with all the Glories of it, shall be open to our view; and, as the expression is in *Job*, *Hell shall be naked before us, and Destruction shall have no covering.*

How shall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of those things which we will not now be persuaded to believe? And how shall we then wish, that we had believed *the terrors of the Lord*; and instead of quarrelling with the Principles of Religion, and calling them into question, we had lived under the constant sense and awe of them?

Blessed be God, that there is yet *hope concerning us*, and that we may yet *flee from the wrath to come*; and that the Miseries of Eternity may yet be prevented in Time: And that for this very end and purpose, our most Gracious and Merciful God hath so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a mind to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

I will conclude all with the Counsel of the *Wise Man*; *Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your selves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not Death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of*
Wisd. of Solomon, chap. 1. ver. 12, 13, 16.
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the Living: But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themselves. Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom, with Thee, O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *AMEN.*

F I N I S.

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